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ABSTRACT

Four papers address how individual scholars may see their obligations to the wider public. In the first paper, "The Social Responsibility of the Academy and Its Academicians," George R. Garrison considers the role, purpose, and mission of Liberal Arts Institutions of Higher Education and examines the civic and social responsibilities of researchers and teachers in the Academy. The second paper, "Reflections on the History Wars," by Arnita A. Jones, first identifies four developments creating a favorable climate for public presentation of history including the increasing numbers of historians in public history jobs, a growing public appetite for history, the modern history education reform movement, and recent historical scholarship. She then considers implications of the rejection of the recently formulated National Standards in History. The third paper, "The Dangers of Willful Ignorance," by Robert Pollack examines the two-edged role of science and urges the teaching of science as an integrated part of the culture and a commitment by higher education to study the political implications of science, and greater involvement in and debate about the major ideas of science. The final paper, "On Defiance and Taking Positions" by Edward W. Said stresses that, although the first commitment of scholars must be to their field and students, as intellectuals in the wider society they should oppose consensus and othrodoxy, remind the wider society of context and larger processes, maintain their independence of thought, and involve themselves with an ongoing process or issue. (DB)

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BEYOND THE ACADEMY: A SCHOLAR'S OBLIGATIONS

George R. Garrison
Arnita A. Jones
Robert Pollack
Edward W. Said

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The Annual Meeting of the American Council of Learned Societies includes a public forum devoted to an issue chosen by the Executive Committee of the Delegates. For April 1995, the Executive Committee (chaired by James Millar) decided to focus on the obligations of scholars to the wider public.

All around us are indications of declining support for intellectual activity, scholarship, and the institutions which support these. There is greater skepticism about science and technology, for example; op-ed page attacks on major directions in humanities scholarship; unrelenting criticism of how well schools, colleges, and universities educate students; and decreasing budgetary support at all levels of government for educational and cultural institutions. In the context of this declining support, the Delegates wanted to address how—and how well—the world of scholarship serves society.

An earlier session at the Annual Meeting had been devoted to a discussion among the Delegates of the obligations of scholarly societies to the wider public, during which Delegates articulated a variety of perspectives on the question, some arising from differences in the substantive fields represented and some arising from differences in ways of framing how scholarly knowledge could and should relate to public issues.

For the public forum itself, we asked four distinguished scholars to address how individual scholars may see their obligations to a wider public. The panelists brought quite different backgrounds and rich experience to the assignment: George Garrison is chair of the Department of Pan-African Studies at Kent State University and a former chair of the Nebraska Humanities Council; Arnita Jones is a public historian and also Executive Director of the Organization of American Historians; Robert Pollack is Professor of Biological Sciences and former Dean of Columbia College at Columbia University; and Edward Said is University Professor and chair of the Doctoral Program in Comparative Literature at Columbia and a former member of the Palestine National Council.

We thank the panelists for their reflections, and hope that this publication will stimulate further discussion of a most important topic.

The Social Responsibility of the Academy and Its Academicians

George R. Garrison
Kent State University

The April 1995 bombing of a federal building in Oklahoma City rang every bell in every head in America that is conscious, sufficiently mature, rational, and intelligent. It has reduced most of us to the most common denominator—moral agents, sensitive human beings and citizens with a common ideal and ethos.

I commend the American Council of Learned Societies for raising this issue, even before this tragedy struck. The topic, "Beyond the Boundaries of the Academy: What is the Scholar's Obligation to the Larger Public," is certainly *apropos*. It is certainly no longer merely an intellectual exercise, if any one ever thought such, to raise that most important and timely question.

Hate has always been with us and on a large scale, but did not impact the majority population to a significant degree. And for whatever reason, the Academy in general has not adequately dealt with the truth about this phenomenon in our midst. Because of this, and other things, we have lived under the shadow of illusion rather than that of reality, subjectivity instead of objectivity, social remoteness and isolationism, as opposed to fraternity and neighborliness, apathy and noninvolvement, over and above empathy and human solidarity.

The hatred and violence that have historically manifested themselves through the institution of slavery and segregation, and the unimaginative violence of lynching, castrations, the bombing of churches and the killing of students by law enforcement agents on the campuses of the Black Academy, has struck with all the force of its deepest and most uncompromising, insensitive and indiscriminate ugliness, in the heartland of this nation.

No society can continue to exist as a highly developed civilization if it supports, or allows to exist unchecked, high levels of violence, hate, confusion, and misunderstanding. There is more rhetoric and polemic directed at the minds of people today than ever before:

- It has removed the clarity in our thought processes and replaced it with confusion;
- It has suppressed the growing buds of harmony among our citizenry, and replaced it with friction and internecine conflict;

- It has attacked and begun to dismantle an educational system that, despite its flaws, was both the envy of the world and the hope of the nation, because of the access it provided all citizens at all levels.[1]

This rhetoric and polemic, and the ugly politics from which they came, have thrown our society into a mode of social decay and devolution, where the very fabric of our national community, including the idealism that has been one of our greatest sources of inspiration, has begun to unravel.

This has developed, to a large extent, because of the inaction, apathy, preoccupation with other matters, and, in some rare instances, complicity of members and segments of the Academy. I do not want to be guilty of over-generalization, so let me be clear in saying that I know that many from our ranks have represented us well on the front, and near front, lines of this struggle. My point is simply that they have been the exceptions and not the rule. There needs to be a conscious effort with a deliberate strategy by the Academy as a whole, to assume what I think is its social responsibility.

In this brief discussion, I would like to discuss what really amounts to the social role and mission of the university and the Professor/Scholar. There are three parts to this short paper. First I lay out the basic assumptions of my argument, which really undergirds what comes later. Next is a discussion about the role, purpose, and mission of Liberal Arts Institutions of Higher Learning. And lastly, I examine the civic and social responsibilities of those researchers and teachers who work in the Academy.

I.

There are certain presuppositions or basic assumptions in this paper that I think it best to disclose immediately, viz.:

- *All* human beings have inalienable human natural rights, among which are LIFE, LIBERTY and the PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS.
- All rational creatures are bound by the IMPERATIVES OF CIVILITY.
- All mature rational beings, individually and collectively, have SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITIES toward each other.
- Human beings have a MORAL OBLIGATION to participate in the historical struggle for social development and progress.
- Institutions in our society exist, among other reasons, to empower individuals toward self-sufficiency, to promote the general welfare, and to aid in the process of social preservation, development, and progress.

Society as we know it, and that which we hope for, can not exist without its institutions. The entire range of human activities occur, generally, within the scope of these societal entities or edifices that we call institutions—financial, marital, religious, military, educational, etc. Society does not,contrary to the views of the nineteenth century sociologist historicist Herbert Spencer and others who think like him, improve itself or progress inevitably. It requires the active participation of its best minds and most energetic members, along with institutions that function efficiently, effectively and justly. If we conceptualize the Academy, generally, as an institution, we can identify its purpose as being primarily to: educate and train the citizenry; discover and disseminate new knowledge; monitor, record and analyze the human condition; encourage and facilitate human creativity and intellectual production through the ARTS, HUMANITIES, SCIENCES and TECHNOLOGY; and aid in the search for, and discovery of, solutions to the pressing problems that threaten the existence and undermine the well-being of humanity.

The Academy has a unique responsibility and opportunity to be a major force in the process of *civilision*—the art and practice of civilized living.[2] Moreover, it must play a role in the creation of a better society. It does this in sundry but connected ways. Furthermore, it must be conscious of the critical role it plays in the maintenance of a *free, open, and just* society.

Under this broad umbrella called the Academy are found professional, vocational, and other types of institutions that do not embrace the traditional role and mission of the Liberal Arts Institution. Hence, what is being claimed here would apply to them to a much lesser degree. It is, therefore, the Traditional Liberal Arts Institutions that embody, more than any of the others, what we mean by the Academy.

To achieve its highest purpose the Academy must embrace a mission that grows out of its true *raison d'etre* and that is significant and meaningful to the human experience. Additionally, it must provide a curriculum that not only adequately covers the content areas of traditional disciplines, but one that has meaningful connections with, and relevance to, the real world of everyday experience as well. Furthermore, this curriculum must develop in the student a critically reflective mind, a sense of connectedness to others, and a social consciousness, as well as being a holistic educational experience that is interdisciplinary, multidisciplined, and multicultural in scope.

Graduates with this type of education will, to a much greater degree, in all probability, become contributing members of society and good

neighbors; exhibit sensitivity to the human condition; and possess a sense of moral responsibility. The overall quality of humanity will be enhanced, and these individuals will, ultimately, aid and abet the positive development and progress of society.

The Academy must also provide a general curriculum, and specific curricula areas, that disclose the actual truth, as we know it, about human experience. Without this the knowledge base of students will be seriously flawed and a source of error and confusion.*

The Academy must also hire professors who are not only experts in their particular fields, but who are good teachers, open-minded to the pluralism that exists in our society and global village, dedicated to the truth, socially conscious, and willing to engage in meaningful service activities. This will make it easier for the Academy to engage in the critical work of building bridges, establishing liaisons, and creating good will between itself and local communities, especially those with the greatest needs.

Those institutions that make up the PUBLIC ACADEMY have an absolute obligation to keep their doors open to all who desire and are capable of pursuing learning. Accordingly, they must remove all artificial barriers that stand between members of this society, across racial, cultural, and class lines, that are clearly blocking the matriculation of some groups, disproportionately, into the university and their preferred career fields. Moreover, the PUBLIC ACADEMY must inform itself sufficiently about the various and specific resources that are necessary to ensure maximum success with its students. In so doing it will be an important partner in the process of plucking "diamonds in the rough" from the various communities, and returning them as "polished stones," and thereby increasing the overall wealth of society, and contributing to the common weal. It is public education and the Academy that will ultimately ensure that this nation remains a leader and global competitor, and that will adequately and effectively prepare individuals for peaceful and harmonious co-existence.

Let us turn our attention now to the off-campus role of the Professor/Scholar.

III.

No institution as important and pivotal as the Academy can exist in isolation from the body of humanity. Likewise, no resource as critical as a teacher/scholar can withhold its experience, intelligence, talents, training, and education from the many processes involved in social, civil,

and/or human preservation, development, and progress, without serious consequence.

What, after all, are the legitimate and fundamental purposes of institutions, of which the Academy is included, and the social responsibilities of the gifted, talented, trained, educated, and experienced? Certainly, in each and all of these instances, as has been indicated above, it is not for purposes and acts that are exclusively private and/or individual in nature. Individuals and institutions that would adopt such narrow and self-regarding, and in some cases selected group-regarding, parameters, in effect, withhold from or deny society that which it needs in order to develop, progress, and evolve. Humanity as a whole, has a legitimate claim on its institutions and the service of those who have benefited the most from the existence of such institutions. In short, professors and scholars, like other professionals, carry with them, as they live and work in this world, inalienable social responsibilities.

Needless to say, not everyone shoulders these responsibilities equally or in the same way. I am not suggesting, as some might, that those who devote the lion's share of their professional lives to the pursuit of research, or that those universities and colleges that give greater rewards to those academicians with a larger research agenda, are making bad use of their time and resources, or are promoting the wrong institutional goals and mission. However, scholars and institutions that vigorously promote research agendas do have an inescapable obligation to ensure that a meaningful and significant, though not total, part of the overall program of research must, in crucial and vital ways, positively enhance the quality of life for individuals, communities, and the society as a whole.

The extra-campus responsibilities of professors include helping communities find solutions to the myriad of problems they face, and assisting in the development of a sound and effective public education system that serves all equally as well. Furthermore, to those whom it applies, it is necessary for trained academicians, researchers and/or scholars to: 1) aid in maintaining an optimum level of public health; 2) help sustain an environment that is conducive to the preservation and health of all life on this planet; and 3) assist in the task of maintaining and promoting peaceful co-existence between individuals, communities, and nations, especially in the development of fair and equitable public policy. Of necessity this means not only making the usual and expected contributions from members of the Academy, but to engage in intellectual and physical labor that will cause to exist a world that is free of racism, classism, sexism, xenophobia, economic exploitation, deprivation, unwarranted violence, bigotry, and hatred of all kinds.

More than at any other time, perhaps, it is required of the scholar to maintain contact with the day-to-day lives of the average citizen, and to travel abroad, sufficiently, in order to get an objective view of the global impact of our domestic, economic, geo-political policies, and military interventions. The residential community of scholars of the Academy must begin to see itself as a part of, in an important and vital way, the larger communities within which each resides. It is incumbent upon the scholar, therefore, to contribute his/her energies, labor, and talents to the positive endeavors and causes of those localities.

Scholars are members of communities and citizens of nations. Going to work on the proverbial HILL in the IVORY TOWERS does not relieve us of the responsibilities associated with that status. University professors and/or scholars are among the intellectual elite and members of the privileged class. We have acquired that status either by inheritance or through the utilization of the institutions of our society. As pointed out earlier, a fundamental postulate of my discussion is that institutions, whether social, economic, political, educational, religious, or otherwise, exist primarily to meet the needs of the general citizenry and to help society develop, progress, and positively evolve.

This being the case, then, no one arrives at the status of THE PRIVILEGED, or ascends to the class of THE ELITE, absolutely on his/her own. Moreover, no one has a *prima facie* right to the rewards, opportunities, assistance, and advantages provided by the institutions of society. If this is true, it follows that those who use and profit from the institutions of the commonwealth incur obligations to those who are less fortunate, but who possess, nevertheless, the same claim on the life-enhancing elements of those institutions. Professors and/or scholars, hence, have a CIVIC RESPONSIBILITY and MORAL OBLIGATION to help in the construction of bridges across the chasm of disparity and despair, between the privileged and the underprivileged.

What I have said about the residents of the Academy applies equally to those scholars that live and work off-campus, beyond the boundaries of the Academy. Both groups are compelled by the same imperatives toward improving the human predicament.

I am aware that some critics may argue that there is an unbridgeable gap between certain groups, established by Nature, God, or some other Higher Principal. Most recently this view has been espoused by Herrnstein and Murray in their massive pseudo-scientific study, in that notorious book, *The Bell Curve*. However, one has merely to undertake a cursory investigation of this misguided and ill-intended intellectual tradition, covering more than two centuries, in order to comprehend why many of us have consigned such research and publications, with all their

implications for public policy and the role of the Academy and academician, to the intellectual heap of the *obsolete, the false, the flawed,* and *the discarded.*"

In conclusion, let me say that living in a Constitutional Democracy, in a society that is open and free, creates civic duties for us all. Those who understand the theory and philosophy behind our form of government, who are free of demagoguery, deception, and disingenuousness, and who are capable of understanding the deep complexities, competing demands from individuals and groups, and who have the skills, talents and means, are at increased obligation to protect this way of life. The great English philosopher, John Locke, explained centuries ago that government and society can be dissolved either by external or internal forces.[1] As we have seen in recent years and by way of recent events, negative forces when left inadequately challenged can mushroom to such an extent that the very pillars of society can be shaken and placed in jeopardy. It is the Professor and or Scholar, when fully actualized and properly focused, who is amply able to respond to those challenges that, if left unchecked, will undermine our way of life. At all times, members of the Academy must participate in the role of overseer and keeper of the gate.

A free, open, and just society, if it is to work well, must operate like a finely tuned and well-oiled machine. Scholars have a role to play in the area of social maintenance. They must, through their research, publications, and civic involvement, provide local communities and the nation with continuous positive input into the discussions and work that are taking place.

Notes

1. The Founding Father, Thomas Jefferson, recognized the essentiality of public education. He believed it to be part of the *conditio sine qua non* for a well-run democratic system of government. The following extended quotation will lay out Jefferson's views on universal public education. In his second proposal, titled "*A Bill for the More General Diffusion of Knowledge,*" to the Virginia Legislature for public education, he wrote:

> Whereas it appeareth that however certain forms of government are better calculated than others to protect individuals in the free exercise of their natural rights, and are at the same time themselves better guarded against degeneracy, yet experience hath shewn, that

> even under the best forms, those entrusted with power have, in time, and by slow operations, perverted it into tyranny; and it is believed that the most effectual means of preventing this would be, to illuminate, as far as practicable, the minds of the people at large. . . . Whereas it is generally true that people will be happiest whose Laws are best, and are best administered, and that Laws will be wisely formed, and honestly administered, in proportion as those who form and administer them are wise and honest; whence it becomes expedient for promoting the publick happiness that those persons, whom nature hath endowed with genius and virtue, should be rendered by liberal education worthy
> to receive, and able to guard the sacred deposit of the rights and liberties of their fellow citizens, and that they should be called to that charge without regard to wealth, birth or other accidental condition or circumstance. . . . It is better that such should be sought for and educated at the common expense of all, than that the happiness of all should be confided to the weak or wicked.

In his well known book, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, Jefferson explains:

> The first stage of this education being the schools of the hundreds, wherein the great mass of the people will receive their instruction, the principal foundations of future order will be laid here. Instead, therefore, of putting the Bible and Testament into the hands of the children at an age when their judgments are not sufficiently matured for religious inquiries, their memories may here be stored with the most useful facts from . . . history. The first elements of morality too may be instilled into their minds. . . . History, by apprising them of the past, will enable them to judge of the future; it will avail them of the experience of other times and other nations; it will qualify them as judges of the actions and designs of men; it will enable them to know ambition under every disguise it may assume; and knowing it, to defeat its views. . . . Every government degenerates when entrusted to the rulers of the people

> alone. The people themselves therefore are its only safe depositories. And to render even them safe, their minds must be improved to a certain degree. . . . An amendment to our constitution must here come in aid to the public education.

Gordon C. Lee, *Crusade Against Ignorance: Thomas Jefferson on Education* (New York: Bureau of Publications, Columbia University, 1962) 81-97 *passim*.

2. This term was coined and explained in a paper, *"Genetic Engineering: Some General Reflections,"* that I read at a colloquium at Howard University, June 20, 1984. In that paper, I wrote:

> Let me introduce at this point a new term, *Civilision*, which is the art and practice of civility. In its passive sense it is the homeostatic state of civilized existence. Civilision presupposes the following conditions:
> a) A set of universal moral principles that would be acceptable to most rational and reasonable persons.
> b) A moral commitment to the development of human potential.
> c) Global egalitarianism.
> d. Universal respect for the dignity and worth of persons.
> e) The treatment of all natural resources, including scientific knowledge, as one global reserve to be conserved and shared by all.
> f) A commitment to achieving for all humans, the highest possible standard of living that the current technology is capable of producing.
> g) Dissolution of all systems of caste and class.
> h) Commitment to the task of universal intellectual enlightenment.
> i) Minimization of killing and the production of harm.
> j) Recognition of the creaturehood of all sentient life (natural or artificial), and respect for nature generally, as a single organic ecological system, upon which all life ultimately depends.

Civilision ensures that the appropriate humanitarian constraints are placed on all human behavior, conduct, and mechanisms.

3. Concerning the importance of scholars telling the truth, Dubois wrote:

> If history is going to be scientific, if the record of human action is going to be set down with that accuracy and faithfulness of detail which will allow its use as a measuring rod and guidepost for the future of nations, there must be set some standards of ethics, in research and interpretation. . . .
>
> Nations reel and stagger on their way; they make hideous mistakes; they commit frightful wrongs; they do great and beautiful things. And shall we not best guide humanity by telling the truth about all this, so far as the truth is ascertainable?
>
> . . . If we are going, in the future . . . with regard to all social issues, to be able to use human experience for the guidance of mankind, we have got clearly to distinguish between fact and desire.
>
> In the first place, somebody in each era must make clear the facts with utter disregard to his own wish and desire and belief. What we have got to know, so far as possible, are the things that actually happened in the world. Then with that much clear and open to every reader, the philosopher and prophet has a chance to interpret these facts: but the historian has no right, posing as scientist, to conceal or distort facts; and until we distinguish between these two functions of the chronicler of human action, we are going to render it easy for a muddled world out of sheer ignorance to make the same mistake ten times over.

W. E. B. Dubois, *Black Reconstruction in America 1860-1880* (New York: Atheneum, 1973) 714, 722.

4. For earlier research into this area, see Louis Ruchames' anthology, *Racial Thought in America*, Vol. I. (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1969). The essays in this work cover the period from 1674-1858. They deal with pro- and anti-slavery arguments, the origin of the races, racial endowments, etc. It is in these essays that we find the range

of opinion within the political, religious, and scientific communities, regarding non-White people in general, and Blacks in particular. The *apologia* for slavery, segregation and other forms of social, political, and religious stratification permeates the writings of these authors. The research of Herrnstein and Murray, in *The Bell Curve* (New York: The Free Press, 1994), fits solidly within that pseudo-scientific tradition which assumes the natural superiority of Whites over Blacks and other Non-whites, seeks explanations and evidence to prove what has already been presupposed, engages in the wildest type of speculation, and utilizes seriously flawed methodology. Let us compare the views of some nineteenth-century scientists with those of Herrnstein and Murray on the question of racial hierarchy. Samuel G. Morton (1799-1851) was a physician and naturalist who did pioneering work in the areas of medicine, paleontology, anthropology, anatomy, and zoology. Louis Agassiz was a distinguished naturalist, who worked in the areas of zoology and geology. Morton explains:

> The grouping of mankind into Races, has occupied the ingenuity of many of the best naturalists of the past and present century. . . . The Caucasian Race is characterized by naturally fair skin. . . . This race is distinguished for the facility with which it attains the highest intellectual endowments. . . . [The Mongolian] division of the human species is characterized by a sallow or olive colored skin. . . . In their intellectual character the Mongolians are ingenious, imitative, and highly susceptible of cultivation. . . . The Malay Race is characterised by a dark complexion. . . . This race is active and ingenious, and possesses all the habits of a migratory, predaceous and maritime people. . . . The [Native] American Race is marked by a brown complexion. . . . In their mental character the [Native] Americans are averse to cultivation, and slow in acquiring knowledge; restless, revengeful, and fond of war, and wholly destitute of maritime adventure. . . . The Ethiopian Race [is] characterised by a black complexion. . . . In disposition the [N]egro is joyous, flexible, and indolent; while the many nations which compose this race present a singular diversity of intellectual character, of which the far extreme is the lowest grade of humanity. (Ruchames 445-447 *passim*)

Similarly, Agassiz asserts:

> And it seems to us to be mock-philanthropy and mock-philosophy to assume that all races have the same abilities, enjoy the same powers, and show the same natural dispositions, and that in consequence of this equality they are entitled to the same position in human society. . . . In [the case of the Africans] we have a most forcible illustration of the fact that the races are essentially distinct, and can hardly be influenced even by a prolonged contact with others when the differences are particularly marked. . . . There has never been a regulated society of [B]lack men developed on that continent [Africa]. . . . Do we not find, on the contrary, that the African tribes are today what they were in the time of the Pharaohs, what they were at a later period, what they are probably to continue to be for a much longer time? And does not this indicate in this race a peculiar apathy, a peculiar indifference to the advantages afforded by civilized society? . . . The indomitable, courageous, proud Indian,—in how very different a light he stands by the side of the submissive, obsequious, imitative [N]egro, or by the side of the tricky, cunning, and cowardly Mongolian! Are not these *facts* [emphasis added] indications that the different tendencies which characterize man in his highest development are permanently brought out in various combinations, isolated in each of the races, in a manner similar to all the developments in physical nature. . . . (Ruchames 458–459 *passim*)

In the twentieth century, Herrnstein and Murray claim:

> Despite the forbidding air that envelops the topic, ethnic differences in cognitive ability are neither surprising *nor in doubt* [emphasis added]. Large human populations differ in many ways, both cultural and biological. It is not surprising that they might differ at least slightly in their cognitive characteristics. That they do is confirmed by the data on ethnic differences in cognitive ability from around the world. One message . . . is that such differences are real and have consequences. (269)

5. Thomas Jefferson received much of his philosophical inspiration and insights from John Locke, especially those found in the Declaration of Independence. Concerning the *social contract* that exists between individuals in society, Locke wrote:

> . . . . Laws [are] not . . . made for themselves, but to be, by their execution, the bonds of the society to keep every part of the body politic in its due place and function. When that totally ceases, the government visibly ceases, and the people become a confused multitude without order or connection. Where there is no longer the administration of justice for the securing of men's rights, nor any remaining power within the community to direct the force, or provide for the necessities of the public, there certainly is no government left. Where the laws cannot be executed it is all one as if there were no laws, and a government without laws is . . . a mystery in politics inconceivable to human capacity, and inconsistent with human society. . . .
>
> When men, by entering into society and civil government, have excluded force, and introduced laws for the preservation of property, peace, and unity amongst themselves those who set up force again in opposition to the laws, do *rebellare*—that is to bring back the state of war, and are properly rebels. . . .
>
> For if any one by force takes away the established legislative of any society, and the laws by them made, pursuant to their trust, he thereby takes away the umpirage which every one had consented to for a peaceable decision of all their controversies, and a bar to the state of war amongst them. . . .
>
> The body of the people may, with respect, resist intolerable tyranny, [but] when it is but moderate they ought to endure it. . . .
>
> To conclude. The power that every individual gave the society when he entered into it can never revert to the individuals again, as long as the society lasts, but will always remain in the community; because without this

there can be no community—no commonwealth, which is contrary to the original agreement.

Britannica Great Books, vol. 35, "Concerning Civil Government, Second Essay," John Locke (Chicago: William Benton Publishers, 1952) 75-81 *passim*.

Reflections on the History Wars

Arnita A. Jones
Organization of American Historians

Several months ago at a formal award dinner I found myself seated next to a successful businessman who serves on the advisory board of a large university. When he learned of my employment with a professional association whose members are drawn largely from the ranks of college professors, we drifted into a conversation about the changes occurring in higher education. In the course of our chat he began to describe his ideas on how a university education can usefully be compared to a factory production system. Students entering as freshmen, he said, are the raw material; they proceed for four years through the assembly line of coursework, resulting in an end product: a credentialed graduate ready to be retailed on the job market. Warming to his metaphor he contended that the contemporary university, like modern industry, must become more productive with less, in order to stay competitive. Faculty research is a commodity that can be marketed, thus reducing the overhead required for the degree production process. It follows then that faculty should be measured according to the laws of supply and demand, in this case by the marketability of their students and their services.

Alarmed, I asked how literature, history, and the other humanities disciplines fit into this production model. My dinner companion admitted cheerfully that they probably would not; other measures would no doubt be needed to gauge resources and results in humanities fields, but he certainly couldn't think of any. Bracing myself for a lecture on political correctness or the dissolution of the curriculum, I was surprised when the gentleman hastily assured me that he found some humanities disciplines most interesting, perhaps even useful, in a marginal kind of way. He was, he confided, an amateur historian himself and by the time dessert was served I was being regaled with stories of his research on family records in European archives. History might not be economically productive, but it could certainly be a harmless hobby, even one which can be self taught. We never figured out where history fit in his production model.

Now university presidents, development professionals, and others who have to make the case for higher education may not find this tale so unfamiliar. By any measure, it is clear that our system of higher education in the United States is undergoing profound transformations in reaction to escalating competition for scarce funds from government

and private sources. A changed student population—older, more ethnically and racially diverse and caught in its own economic difficulties—is increasingly possessed of a consumer mentality, demanding less of itself and more of faculties. New technologies hold out the promise of research tools and teaching techniques undreamt of scarcely a decade ago even as they create the temptation to adopt economies of scale in terms of teaching loads and class sizes that are hostile to a healthy learning environment.

The humanities, including history, cannot avoid being impacted by these pressures as colleges and universities undergo the same kind of rationalizing process permeating other sectors of the economy. Classes are larger; retiring faculty are often not replaced or frequently replaced with part-timers; securing travel and research funds becomes more competitive; non-tenure track positions proliferate; and post-tenure review has become a reality in some public universities. And, lest we forget, another generation of graduate students, attracted to expanding doctoral programs in the late 1980s, faces bleak prospects for academic careers.

These trends are real, not ephemeral. Historians, and scholars from other humanities disciplines, are not likely to acquiesce in being measured by the factory production model. Still, in all but a handful of institutions they will be sorely disadvantaged if they cannot produce sound and specific information to describe their value to the public.

Until quite recently this thrust into public service seemed to come at a fortuitous time for scholars of American history. In the last decade several developments have converged to create an atmosphere inviting, if not seducing, historians to venture out of the academy and apply their skills and learning to a rich assortment of public venues—historic sites and preservation programs, for example, or policy analysis, films, museum exhibits, and education reform efforts, to name only a partial list.

What are these developments creating a favorable climate for public presentation of history? Let me trace *four* which I think are particularly significant.

The first had its origins in the employment crisis of the 1970s, but has in reality far deeper roots. I am fond of reminding my members and officers that the old Mississippi Valley Historical Association, as the Organization of American Historians was originally called when it was founded, was not the creation of faculty in higher education institutions. Rather it was organized in 1907 by leaders of the historical societies of the midwest, men like Benjamin Shambaugh, superintendent of the State Historical Society of Iowa, who argued that opportunities were almost

unlimited to apply, as he put it, the "scientific knowledge of history in the practical affairs of to-day." The new Association's founding fathers intended it to become a vehicle for securing cooperation between the historical societies and the departments of history in the Mississippi Valley.

Over the years, of course, these close connections faded, a process accelerated by the expansion of higher education under the G.I. Bill and its aftermath of baby boomers. When the MVHA became the OAH, it was largely an association of college and university professors. Not many years later, in 1976, the Organization became one of the founding members of the National Coordinating Committee for the Promotion of History, now the historical profession's advocacy arm, but then an effort to rebuild bridges to alienated colleagues in museums, historical societies, federal historical programs, and other places where new Ph.D.s might find employment. At the same time, a number of graduate programs began consciously tailoring their curricula to applied pursuits—archival work, cultural resource management, business history, and the like—and found a receptive market.

Some historians who made this transition into what we came to call public history jobs made it grudgingly, re-entering academe at the earliest opportunity, or drifting out of the profession altogether. Others never looked back and embraced the satisfaction of, (as Shambaugh had put it several decades earlier), applying history to practical problems. In 1991 American history Ph.D.s surveyed by the National Academy of Sciences reported the highest job satisfaction of any humanities field and the highest proportion employed in areas outside of higher education. This group is an important, although not a dominant, presence in the historical profession today.

A second reason for the high visibility of public history in the last decade is the public's growing appetite for history. Over the last thirty years or so, hundreds of thousands of ordinary citizens have joined or organized thousands of local historical societies. Millions of others participate in the reenactment of battles and other historical events, watch documentary historical films, attend Chatauqua and other public programs sponsored by state humanities councils and other community groups. Last year the historic sites managed by the National Park Service received 55 million visitors—an audience of staggering proportions for historical research and programming.

A third circumstance encouraging the public presentation of history would include the modern history education reform movement, a phenomenon which has been with us for a decade now and shows no sign of abating, although clearly we have entered into a rancorous phase

of its development. Academic historians have been deeply engaged with history in the nation's schools since the late nineteenth century—a fascinating story that has yet to receive sufficient attention. But, as in the case of other efforts to reach out to the public, interest in reforming precollegiate history education was swamped in the great expansion of higher education after the second world war.

Beginning, however, with two national commissions—the Bradley Commission and the National Commission on the Social Studies—in the mid 1980s and converging with grassroots efforts like history teaching alliances to connect precollegiate and higher education history teachers, the campaign to improve history teaching has now captured the nation's attention. This reform movement has nurtured an appetite for an enriched curriculum and better prepared teachers that may be difficult to satisfy given the divisions within American society today and the lack of will to apply America's economic resources to education. The most recent manifestation of these efforts has been national standards in history—and its future is very much in doubt.

Finally, it is important to recognize that recent historical scholarship itself is also a reason for history's flourishing public sector. As historians in recent decades have focused on women, minorities, workers, ordinary soldiers, and the like, they have found audiences from those same groups. Lately, however, it has become very clear that those audiences are not always blank slates merely to be engraved by the historian.

How ironic it is then, at just the moment when higher education is asking humanities scholars to demonstrate the public value of their work, that those historians who have ventured out into that public arena now find themselves engaged in a major phase of the culture wars. The specific battles will be familiar to you all: the debate over whether the nation could or should celebrate the anniversary of Columbus' voyages from a multicultural perspective; the outrage generated when the American West exhibit at the National Museum of American Art used paintings to portray a darker side of westward expansion; the strident criticism received by some historians who believed they could make a positive contribution to the development of a history theme park planned by the Disney corporation in northern Virginia; concerns on the part of the family and followers of the Martin Luther King family that the visitors center planned by National Park Service could not adequately commemorate his life and work; the cancelling of the Enola Gay and later other exhibits by the Smithsonian Institution for fear of offending noisy pressure groups and the Congress; and of course the National Standards in History, maligned in newspapers throughout the country, and on dozens of talk shows, and denounced by a vote of 99 to 1 in the U.S. Senate.

What happened? How did Clio get mugged on the way to the forum? or should I say Capitol Hill?

Well, she was not so careful as she might have been in following the rules. She ventured alone into a strange and unfamiliar neighborhood, looking uncertain of where she was going, not striding confidently and with purpose. And she didn't carry a weapon, at least not a weapon of choice on the mean streets of public discourse in the late twentieth century.

I have to admit that as a discipline we have approached public history in a hesitating way, not quite sure of the legitimacy of what we are doing. Gradually this situation has improved over the years as the products of public history work have been held up to critical scrutiny in learned journals and other scholarly forums. And it is another irony of this story that the recent attacks on history in museum exhibits have forced historians to reach out to other professionals and join with them in some hard thinking about standards of appropriate behavior in the public presentation of history.

Doing public history well is not easy, not just a matter of picking up a quick consulting fee for repackaging some old research or lectures; not just a matter of punching a clock at an institution where one gives substantially less than 100 percent effort; certainly not just a matter of making clients or consumers feel better.

It is partly a matter of understanding the needs of our audiences, learning to respect the perspectives and knowledge they bring to a public presentation or exhibit; learning how to treat them as partners rather than empty vessels. It is a matter of exploring, with our various publics, the dissonance frequently apparent between documents and memories.

But it is also a matter of developing a coherent explanation for the fact that, yes! we do rewrite history. Of explaining why the historical profession tolerates, indeed revels in differing interpretations of the same sequence of historical events. Why analyzing a decision-making process is not attacking the legitimacy of the decision made.

We don't need to learn to use fabrications, deliberate misreadings or misunderstandings of the positions held by those who disagree with us—that weapon of choice in much of today's public argument about history. We probably do need to learn to talk in something more closely approximating sound bytes. And we need to learn to argue vigorously on behalf of the work we do and the integrity of the discipline we represent—in the news media, in state and federal legislative bodies, with our students and clients. And most important we must remember that those trustees and legislators, with their production model of higher

education, are listening to the debate.

In the nearly twenty years I have been associated with public history—in one way or another—I have seen a great deal of change in how the profession responds to the opportunities public history presents and I expect to see more. Attacks on history and historians have been painful, frightening, sometimes numbing. But I also see members and leaders of my organization energized by the debates over who owns history and exhilarated by the realization that Americans care deeply about the work historians do. It is an exciting time to be an historian.

The Dangers of Willful Ignorance

Robert Pollack
Columbia University

I have been asked to address the topic, "What is the scholar's obligation to the larger public?" This is an easy question. A scholar's obligation is always the same: to speak truth to power. The alternatives—to lie to power; or to tell the truth, but only to one's colleagues—always end up contributing to a mess at best, or a disaster at worst. The idea that scientists, in particular, can avoid dealing with the political consequences of their work, has never sat well with me. As I study the roots of my own field—human genetics—I am struck by the magnitude of the problems that have stemmed from my profession's capacity for willful innocence.

In this season, it makes sense to begin with a look backward, over our shoulder. On the 18th of June, 1940, Winston Churchill spoke to the House of Commons on the disastrous course of the war of England and France against Germany. He ended with the famous peroration:

> Let us therefore brace ourselves to our duties and so bear ourselves that, if the British Empire and its Commonwealth last for a thousand years, men will say, "This was their finest hour."

Many will recognize this sentence today, but few may recall an earlier phrase it refers to; the reason for "therefore:"

> But if we fail, then the whole world, including the United States, including all that we have known and cared for, will sink into the abyss of a new Dark Age made more sinister, and perhaps more protracted, by the lights of perverted science.

What could Churchill have meant in 1940 by "the lights of perverted science?" While he could have been guessing at the coming use of rockets, jet planes, napalm or nuclear bombs, he did not have to imagine any future weapons to call upon a full decade of enthusiastic participation by life-scientists in the pre-war agenda of Hitler's government. This collaboration had already led to the orderly, scientifically-planned and executed euthanasia of hundreds of thousands of Germans, and by 1940 these operations had been extended to the East, in occupied Poland.

By the time Churchill spoke, the major organizations of German genetics, biology, anthropology, and medicine and many of the best scientists and physicians in the Reich had joined for more than five years in murder of what the German government and its scientists had agreed to call "Ballastexistenzen," lives not worth life.

Fifty years later those "lights of perverted science" still have the power to cast a shadow over the laboratories and hospitals in which biology and medicine come together. In the last third of the century, a new biology—built on the discovery that DNA is the genetic material—has provided medicine with a research agenda and a set of tools and techniques drawn from basic research on the human genome.

These have recently given us such notable successes as the isolation and characterization of the genes responsible for cystic fibrosis, Huntington's Disease, and hundreds of other inherited diseases; the restoration of function by insertion of absent genes in tissues of patients with inherited diseases; and technologies of early warning for late-onset diseases such as Alzheimer's, cancer, and heart disease.

While these successes and others like them are welcome, they have come to us entwined with less desirable consequences. For every late onset disease that can be diagnosed in advance of symptoms by a telltale difference in DNA, considerable numbers of healthy people find they are paying large sums only to confront news that often brings them little to do but wait for the inevitable.

The widening gap between diagnosis and treatment has had a second consequence, one that touches one of the most sensitive issues facing us today. Prenatal DNA diagnosis coupled with termination of pregnancy provides a rational way to avoid bearing a child with a life-threatening inherited disease; more and more diagnoses of variant versions of a gene can be made in a first-trimester fetus, providing a woman with a new and ever-growing set of reasons for early termination of her pregnancy.

But before molecular diagnostic techniques can be properly used on the DNA of either adults or fetuses, all interested parties must agree which versions of any gene are to be considered normal, and which may be taken as markers of childhood or adult disease.

In the near future these techniques will allow pregnant women to decide whether or not they want to bear a child whose physical and mental states today fall well inside the boundaries of "normal." With time, computer technology may well allow the simultaneous analysis of DNA data on dozens or hundreds of different genes. At that moment, a knowledgeable woman will be able to get the information she needs to decide whether or not to carry to term a child that would be, for instance, a boy, or a girl, or short, or deaf, or gay, or straight.

Taken together, these and many other two-edged developments at the boundary of medicine and basic science have defined a new sort of privacy, one that all other definitions of privacy are dependent upon: the right to control the information contained in one's own genome. Both law and politics move slowly; the technology is moving much faster than either.

As a result, issues of genetic privacy, left to grow in the dark of legal and political neglect, have developed the capacity to present us with unexpected and nasty surprises. If the "perverted science" that the Allies and the people of occupied Europe rightly feared and hated is still nowhere on the horizon, the tools and capacity for its reappearance are, unfortunately, nevertheless in our hands today.

The public knows this. Advances in human genetic analysis have been met by a widespread fear that aspects of molecular medicine somehow are—or will soon become—a shadow on every person's future. The negative reaction to the contributions of genomic science to medicine manifests itself in many ways, from Congressional hostility to further increases in basic research budgets at the NIH, to legal skirmishes based on the supposition that techniques to elucidate a person's genetic status will be used by government for non-therapeutic purposes.

How should the academic community itself respond to these matters? If we confuse what is possible with what is so, we slow the progress of the biomedical sciences, and reduce everyone's chance of benefiting from such progress—including our own. If we ignore the past, and claim the risk is too small to worry about, we will lose control of our own futures and share responsibility for a future burdened with avoidable consequences.

The profession has only one good answer: to approach the problem as scientists. And the profession is right. Scientists should ask perceptive questions about the technologies we have developed, gather data carefully, test our hypotheses, draw our conclusions, and publish our results so that our colleagues and others may know what we have found.

Our obligation is sharpened by the fact that the most powerful technologies for violating genetic privacy come from the best—not the worst—of our nation's laboratories. It would be wrong to simply cull out the risks and attribute them to "bad" science; these problems are ours, precisely because they derive from excellent science.

There is a second answer, equally important though less central to the profession: to teach science well, to teach it so it becomes a living part of our culture. Here is the great physicist, Richard Feynman of Cal Tech, on this second task:

> It is our responsibility as scientists, knowing the great progress which comes from a satisfactory philosophy of ignorance, the great progress which is the fruit of freedom of thought, to proclaim the value of this freedom; to teach how doubt is not to be feared but welcomed and discussed; and to demand this freedom, as our duty to all coming generations.[1]

Today, few people see science this way. According to too many news magazines, TV documentaries, soap operas and movies, scientists pursue magic powers as white-coated practitioners of a pagan religion. They obey only their own arcane rules, and then only to be first to uncover some mystery of the universe that would be better kept hidden. But since these discoveries can lead to new products of great, if morally ambivalent, value, the public cannot totally disregard their efforts. Public interest in science from this perspective is reduced to a somewhat risky set of deals with somewhat shady entrepreneurs.

But scientists active in their laboratories cannot be asked to create new knowledge, and share their creations with the lay public, out of good will alone. We need the leaders of our colleges and universities to articulate a vision of the University that includes at its center a commitment to the study of the political implications of science, and to back that vision with reasonable resources. Without such a jump-start, the other interests that lie at the heart of a science department are simply too strong and too utilitarian to be budged. The problem is, all too often we are managed, rather than led. Here is how a great academic leader, the late A. Bartlett Giamatti of Yale, distinguished between the two:

> Management is the capacity to handle multiple problems, neutralize various constituencies, motivate personnel. . . . Leadership on the other hand is an essentially moral act, not—as in most management—an essentially protective act. It is the assertion of a vision, not simply the exercise of a style: the moral courage to assert a vision of the institution in the future and the intellectual energy to persuade the community or the culture of the wisdom and validity of the vision. It is to make the vision practicable, and compelling.[2]

Finally, it is not enough to be well led, it is not enough to tell the truth; it is also necessary to live in the world, to engage the issues of the day in one's scholarly work. I saw this was possible when I was an

undergraduate, and the lesson has stayed with me. Though I was majoring in physics at Columbia in the late 1950s, I tagged along with my friends to literature classes taught by Lionel Trilling. He was a distant, somewhat foggy creature to me, since he dragged constantly on his cigarettes, and I always wound up at the back of one or another very smoke-filled room.

Nevertheless, I knew he was serious about the books he taught, and serious about the world, because an overlap of concerns—the text and the world—marked Trilling's teaching. Even though he sometimes claimed to be interested solely in the words of the text, the world could not keep from informing his interpretations.

My colleague Edward Said caught this twenty years ago, in this quote from an article about his book *Orientalism*:

> In a recent interview [Edward Said] cites with approval Lionel Trilling's assertion that "there is a mind of society" and argues that it is this mind that the critic should "address, tutor, doctor, inform, evaluate, criticize, reform."[1]

I find this notion of a "mind of society" entirely congenial. But as a scientist, when I look around me I find, with some dismay but no surprise, precious few colleagues willing to "address, tutor, doctor, inform, evaluate, criticize, reform" the scientific part of the societal mind.

There are few small classes in science for a curious undergraduate, no common syllabus; there is no list of exemplary ideas, there are no axes of debate. Instead we offer a lot of different ways to memorize, with a few oddball chances to read and argue thrown in for flavor, like raisins in a bland, doughy pudding.

Why is this? Why does the scholarly world presume that any idea from the humanities or social sciences can be not only understood, but debated, by a seventeen-year old; but that no idea from the sciences is debatable, unless one first marries the profession, through choice of major and then career?

Some scientists—not all, and not the best—think this is just the way it is. Some humanists—also not all, and also not the best—agree. Both, oddly enough, agree that science is hard stuff. Both see science as a narrative with a special claim to truth, a claim that makes it intrinsically inaccessible. Even as they disagree as to whether the claim is justified, they agree on science's inaccessibility.

I don't agree with either of them. I see science as a fully accessible argument between imagination and physical action. The imagination of

a scientist creates a vision of one aspect of the natural world, usually of the world outside the mind, but sometimes even of an aspect of the mind itself. But that vision is never enough: physical action—experimentation—weighs in immediately, to test the model.

This back-and-forth of theory and practice—the scientific method—works, because in science, the imagination must either yield to, or encompass, the results of experiment. There is no room in science for empty speculation, nor for its complement, the involutionary, anarchic, cynical despair we find in so much of today's critical theory.

The resulting narratives of successful science—discoveries, we call them—are bounded by culture no less than any other narrative. But the models they stem from, confirm, and alter, are not simply narratives. These models, the most-recently-adapted, current working hypotheses of science, float above all their previous narrative versions, persisting through time, never final, never culture-bound.

We live by such models, because they mold the patterns of our thought. Shakespeare gave us our way of seeing ourselves as having inner voices and developing through inner dialogue. In no really different way, the sciences continue to give us new ways to see ourselves. These, in time, become as completely taken for granted as the Shakespearean notion of a private monologue. In just this way Freud's unconscious and Darwin's natural selection—to name two—have not merely been added to our vocabulary. They have become aspects of the way we understand ourselves.

Now here's the paradox: new ways of seeing ourselves or our place in nature are precisely what we do *not* teach today, neither to the undergraduate, nor to the specialist. There is a reason for student and professor alike to feel the same urgency about this intellectual shortfall, as we are obliged to feel about the various fiscal shortfalls that nibble at our heels.

I'll sum up with a few words from Dante's *Inferno*. I first read the *Inferno* in 1958, in a Columbia general education course. A while ago I returned to it, reading Pinsky's new translation with great pleasure. The *Inferno* is about many things; but to me, it was and still is, above all, an extraordinary example of the power of words—text—to transcend death. Dante meets the damned souls of hell, and has the audacity to promise they will have eternal life on earth if they will allow him to write their stories. They tell him their stories, he writes them out brilliantly and, after seven hundred years, we still read those stories. Apparently no-one can say Dante promised more than he could deliver, because it is clear that we live today in a world of science easily recognized in Dante's *Inferno*.

In Canto 31, we meet ourselves, face-on. At the bottom of the last circle Dante sees, in the distance, a Stonehenge of monstrous, missile-like towers. Thinking these to be the Giants of Genesis surrounding the very pit of Hell, he says to us in a parenthetical aside:

> . . . (Nature indeed,
>
> When she abandoned making these animals,
> Did well to keep such instruments from man;
> Though she does not repent of making whales
>
> Or elephants, a person who subtly inquires
> Into her ways will find her both discrete
> And just, in her decision: if one confers
>
> The power of the mind, along with that
> Of immense strength, upon an evil will
> Then people will have no defense from it.)

Have no doubt: there will be more moments when misused science will indeed leave people with no defense from an evil will. Our obligation as scholars is to do what we can to keep science from being misused. To do this, we must begin to open collaborations between scientist and nonscientist, to create a real home in the academy for the changing but always powerful models, and not just the painfully-memorized, data-filled narratives, of science.

These scientific models not only articulate, but also shadow, our lives. Some threaten older notions of free will, human equality, even of fate itself. This is not a reason to inhibit the work of science; but it is a reason to be sure these models do not go from the laboratory to the general culture, unchallenged by examination in our colleges and universities.

Notes

1. Feynman, Richard, *What Do You Care What Other People Think?* (New York: Bantam Books, 1989) 248.

2. Giamatti, A. Bartlett in National Research Council, *Fulfilling the Promise: Biology Education in the Nation's Schools* (Washington, DC: National Academy Press, 1990) 102.

3. Katz, James C., "Trilling Award to Said," *Columbia College Today* 4.9 (Winter 1977) 14.

On Defiance and Taking Positions

Edward W. Said
Columbia University

Thank you very much. I had assumed and was correct in my assumption that my predecessors on the platform would really say all that there was necessary to say about this complicated subject; so what I am left with is a series of glancing observations of the kind that are designed to provoke further discussion and perhaps to elaborate on some of the main points that were made.

I shall begin by saying, first of all, that compared, say, to most African, Asian and Middle Eastern universities, the American university constitutes a relatively utopian space, where we can actually talk about the boundaries of the academy. In other universities in other parts of the world, of course, the academy is part of the political system, and academic appointments are necessarily, very often the case, outright political appointments. This isn't to say, nevertheless, about the American academy that the connections between our world as members of the academy, and the outside world, are not there; they obviously are. The university depends for funding on governments, corporations, foundations, and individuals, and its ties to the larger society, so well outlined in the previous essays, are there for us to see and note.

Nevertheless, the first point I want to make is that it seems to me that the role of the member of the academy, the teacher, the scholar, the professor, is principally to his or her own field. That is to say, I think that there's no getting away from the fact that, speaking now as a teacher, my principal constituency is made up by my students; and therefore, there is no substitute, no amount of good work on the outside, no amount of involvement, that is a substitute for commitment not to only one's students, but also the rigors of the discipline in which one finds oneself. Nevertheless, one thing that needs to be observed about this is that there's always the danger of specialization, and of what has come to be called professionalization. That is to say, I think that the tendency in the academy to focus upon membership in a guild tends, therefore, to constrict and limit the critical awareness of the scholar. And this kind of restriction is manifest in a number of things. For example, the use of jargon, specialized language that nobody else can understand. One of my early works—well, perhaps not that early; but it was written, or published seventeen or eighteen years ago—was a book called *Orientalism*, which took its main subject from the way in which a field,

as all fields are, is constituted by its language; but that the language itself becomes further and further removed from the experiences and the realities of the subject, in this case the Orient, about which the language was supposed to turn. So the tendency to exclusivist, professionalized and above all uncritical acceptance of the principal doctrines of one's field are, it seems to me, great dangers within the academy for the professional, for the teacher, for the scholar. And I think, therefore, it's somehow important to balance and maintain a kind of coexistence between the necessities of the field and the discipline of the classroom, on the one hand, and of the special interest that one has in it, on the other, with one's own concerns as a human being, as a citizen in the larger society. For example, I've written alot about the Middle East, but never in the thirty-three years that I've taught, have I ever taught the Middle East. I've always taught Western literature and culture. But necessarily, I think one's work as a scholar is always inflected with one's background, with one's non-academic concern. In my case, for example, it's always been with experiences like exile, like imperialism and the problems of empire, which indeed touch many of the concerns of modern Western literature.

A second point, it seems to me then, is to move from the academy to the larger world, and to remind oneself that what we try to—at least what I try to—impart to my students isn't so much reverence for authority, or above all for what I say as a teacher, (this is of course, one of the pleasures, prerogatives, if you like, of somebody who teaches in the humanities or let's say the historical sciences, as opposed to the natural sciences), but there is I think a terribly important thing that one can teach at the same time that one teaches a field or a subject or a discipline—and that is some sense of critical awareness, some sense of skepticism, that you don't take what's given to you, even to your own students. You try not to give them the material with the sense that it's unquestioned and somehow authoritative, but rather to cultivate at the same time, what seems to be paradoxically at odds with it, namely a kind of healthy skepticism for what authorities say. And here it seems to me that clear language and irony are centrally important, not to take refuge—this is something one *can* teach in the classroom—not to take refuge in woolly generalization or jargon or anything that one can hide behind as a way of avoiding a decision and taking a position.

And, lastly, connected to this, it seems to me given the general climate of religious enthusiasm, not to call it fundamentalism for obvious reasons, but religious enthusiasm of one sort or another, there is an extraordinary importance, it seems to me, in the humanities and the historical sciences to focus on the importance of secularism. Vico's great

observation that human beings make their own history, which is central to all the historicizing disciplines is something that must never be lost sight of.

The third point, then, which has guided me is that as one ventures further outside the academy, I think it is extraordinarily important to develop a sense not so much of professional vocation, but rather what I would call intellectual vocation. (And one thing I should say parenthetically is that there are no clear rules for all these things; I mean, there is no manual that tells you how you should behave. There is, of course, history itself, and one's own sense of commitment and principle.) Because the intellectual is not simply a professor, not simply a professional, wrapped in the mantle of authority and special language and special training—which are, of course, terribly important; I'm not trying to put them down. But I think, once you get out of the academy into the larger world, then I think the intellectual plays a particular role, and this role is essentially—it is perhaps easiest to define it in terms of negatives—is that the intellectual, as opposed to the professional, is someone who is, by the very virtue of this vocation, an opponent of consensus and orthodoxy, particularly at a moment in our society when the authorities of consensus and orthodoxy are so powerful; and the role of the individual, the voice of the individual, the small voice if you like, of the individual tends to be not heard. So the role of the intellectual is not to consolidate authority, but to understand, interpret, and question it; this is another version of what Bob Pollack was talking about in the notion, of course, of speaking the truth to power, a point I make in my book, *Representations of the Intellectual*. I think it is very difficult, once you venture outside of the academy, not to be affected by what seems to me the main issue for the intellectual today, which is the panorama with all the dislocations and displacements and distortions of our society, not to be affected by human suffering. And I think, therefore, the intellectual vocation essentially is somehow to alleviate human suffering and not to celebrate what in effect does not need celebrating, whether that's the state or the patria or any of these basically triumphalist agents in our society.

To enter into the public sphere means, therefore, not to be afraid of controversy or taking positions. There's nothing more maddening, it seems to me, in our own time than people who say, "Oh no, no, that's controversial; I don't want to do it"; or the habitual trimming refrain, "No, no, I can't sign that because I mean, you know, I may disturb matters and people may think the wrong thing about me." But it seems to me that the entrance into the public sphere means, as the French writer Genet said, the moment you write something, you are necessarily in the public

sphere; you can't pretend that you're writing for yourself anymore. And so we're back, therefore, to issues having to do with the media that Arnita Jones was talking about earlier, public discussion, publication; but principally, I think not in the language of the profession, and the guild language, but always pushing the accepted boundaries as far as they will go.

Fourth, and I'm just taking very limited examples, but it seems to me—(I find myself coming back to this very often in my own work)—that one of the major roles today for the intellectual in the public sphere is to function as a kind of public memory; to recall what is forgotten or ignored; to connect and contextualize and to generalize from what appear to be the fixed "truths," let's say in the newspapers or on television, the sound byte, the isolated story, and connect them to the larger processes which might have produced the situation that we're talking about—whether it is the plight of the poor, the current status of U.S. foreign policy, etc. And you understand what I'm saying is true of intellectuals on the Left or on the Right. It's not a matter of political affiliation, but it's a general, as I say "public" memory, which in the generally disconnected and fragmentary public sphere, it falls to the intellectual to make the connections that are otherwise hidden; to provide alternatives for mistaken policies; and to remind an audience, which increasingly thinks in terms of instrumentalization and of what is effective—(I mean the great watch word in political language today is pragmatism, *real politik*, all of those kinds of things)—to remind the audience of principle, to remind the audience of the moral questions that may be hidden in the clamor and din of the public debate. And, finally, as part of this aspect of public memory, to deflate the claims of triumphalism, to remember, as Benjamin says, that history is often written from the point of view of the victor, and that the great procession of victory trails in its wake the forgotten bodies of the vanquished. I think it's important that these kinds of things be part of the role of the intellectual as a public memory in society.

Fifth, I think it's terribly important since all of us, whether we like it or not, are affiliated with things: we're members of the ACLS, of one or another professional organizations; we win awards, which make me deeply suspicious, even the ones that I've won—because I think that the most important thing for the intellectual in the public sphere, beyond the bounds of the academy, is some sort of sense of independence, that you're speaking really with your own voice and from your own sense of conviction, and that you try your best somehow not to collaborate with the centralizing powers of our society. I'm speaking really about this particular moment, where it's very, very easy, given debates on social

policy or foreign policy that are necessarily shaped, to a certain degree, by the government. It strikes me as difficult but necessary to try to be somewhat marginal, rather than to be right in the middle of some office-making policy. It's obviously easy to be a kibitzer and just endlessly make criticisms, but I would say it's almost easier to be in the center of things and to be there passing out judgment. And I think a more challenging role for the intellectual, although the intellectual obviously has to be in both places, the more challenging role for the intellectual as I understand him or her, is to be slightly to the side of the authorizing and centralizing powers in our society.

And lastly, the sixth point I want to make, is it seems to me that beyond the boundaries of the academy, there seems to be an absolute necessity to connect oneself, to affiliate oneself, to align oneself with an ongoing process or contest of some sort—the debates over the question of Columbus, the celebrations of Columbus Day or not, the questions raised by Arthur Schlesinger in his book on the disuniting of America, the question of the national history standards. All of these issues, it seems to me, require in the end, not just a little bit of this, a little bit of that, and while I can see, of course, the importance of trying to adjudicate between extreme claims, it doesn't seem to me to be sufficient for the intellectual just to do that and to keep the discourse simply going, but rather to take positions. And I think there is, in the end, no better example than one's own example. And so the sense of being part of a process, whether a process of developing a voice, trying to talk about the unheard, trying to improve the lot of the unfortunate and the oppressed—whatever. There is a sense in being and being also answerable to it, that it isn't just a matter of saying whatever you want without any sense of responsibility or the need to accept criticism and to engage in a debate or a dialogue with this constituency. And of course this also raises the question of what is the constituency. I think, just to speak from my own experience for just a moment, I've always been in this country somebody who is both American and who comes from the Arab world; and I've always felt, especially in recent years, that the sense of really belonging to two cultures or three cultures or different constituencies constantly raises issues that are terribly interesting in and of themselves. I mean, they give one almost an aesthetic pleasure if one wasn't also victimized by them, and that is, how do you address these constituencies? What does it mean actually to *say* something? An example was, seven or eight years ago at the time of the Salman Rushdie issue, the *Satanic Verses*, where in New York it was important, I felt, for a writer from the Islamic world such as myself, to take a position clearly on the side of freedom of expression. But then a few months later I happened to be in the Arab world, I went

to Egypt, and there the public position was that the book was banned and was deemed blasphemous. And then I was asked a question about Rushdie at a public gathering, and I was immediately faced with what to do. I mean, do you say a different thing to an audience that's bound to be unsympathetic to your views? Or do you try somehow to maintain the same position but address it, obviously in a different language, to a different constituency. And of course, I think the choice was forced on me to take the same position but to try and put it in the language of the place. And that way, I think one of the most exciting things is that you try, then, to create a new constituency. I mean, if an opinion is unpopular, or if something isn't said, then you can try by saying it to create an audience for it where an audience perhaps hadn't existed before.

I conclude by saying that if one tries to follow some of these things outside the academy, unprotected in a sense by the academy, I think it's likely, particularly if you take seriously the need to stress what is forgotten and what is perhaps unpopular, popularity and success become moot issues. I don't think you can make a lot of friends that way. And so the whole issue is raised anew as one gets older in life, begins to think about comfortable retirement, and just sort of fading gently into the twilight. But that's very much against my own spirit. I think the proper attitude of the intellectual outside the academy is some sort of defiance. It's very hard to maintain, but I find that it is a source of vitality, and I think, if I may be allowed this final, totally irreverent comment, much more important than getting one more award or one more prize.

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